



Afghanistan

April 10, 2006

Freedom Watch

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

Soldiers deliver supplies to orphanage

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Mary Lien reacts to the sudden dust storm created by the Blackhawk's rotor downwash during a landing at a forward operating base. The flight was supporting an aerial road survey mission in eastern Afghanistan. Lien is a civil engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Afghanistan Engineer District.

Photo by Eric Aubrey
Afghanistan Engineer District

Cover: A Combined Joint Task Force - 76 Soldier delivers supplies to an orphanage during a civic-assistance mission.

Photo by Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry
19th Public Affairs Detachment

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Afghanistan **Freedom** Watch

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

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Many groups, one location, one cause

By Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste
19th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Members and representatives from numerous provincial reconstruction groups all gathered here March 28 to March 31 for a PRT Commanders' Conference.

The conference allowed present and future provincial reconstruction team leaders from United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, United States Assistance for International Development, NATO's International Security Assistance Force and Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan an opportunity to share their opinions, ideas and concerns about PRT projects, said Dutch Army Col. Willem Van Den Bos, deputy commander of Regional Command - South.

"The conference is being held to make sure PRTs have a shared set of priorities and a clear direction from their commanders, and direction that reflects Afghanistan's strategy for its own development," said Chris Alexander, a deputy special representative of the secretary general of the United Nations.

"It's important to have common



Photo by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste

Provincial reconstruction team leaders work together to solve a scenario at the PRT Commanders' Conference here March 29.

understanding of how PRTs work in all of Afghanistan," Van Den Bos said.

Common understanding and common ground were important to those who attended the conference.

"This is the world taking part in an issue they all care about -- Afghanistan," said Army Lt. Col. Earl Hairston, CJTF-76 chief of civic-military operations for Afghanistan.

Working together builds professional relationships as well as friendships, Alexander said.

"Everyone's been very friendly. This develops friendships at all levels. All the countries and nationalities have a sense of teamwork," Alexander said. "When everyone arrives here, the amount of

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Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Afghan cultural tidbit

You are a good friend

Dari

Shuma yak doste khoob hasted
(Shoo-ma yak doe-stay khoob huas-ted)

Pashtu

Tasoo yow khu malgeray yaste
(Tah-soo yow khoo mal-gah-ray yaws tay)

The two main languages spoken in Afghanistan are Dari and Pashtu. Dari, derived from "darbari" meaning the language of the court of kings, is spoken in the central, northern and western provinces of Afghanistan. Pashtu is spoken in the eastern, southern and southeastern provinces.

Afghan, Coalition doctors provide care to villagers



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marti D. Ribeiro

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Kimberly M. Kauffman gives oral dewormer to a child in Nangraesh. Kauffman is a member of a Medical Civic Assistance Program team that provided medical care and sanitation classes in the Laghman and Nuristan provinces in eastern Afghanistan March 19 - 24.

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poverty and the state of this country become apparent. Everyone wants to come together to improve the lives of the people in this country."

Teamwork and common goals made for a pleasant and productive conference.

"It has gone very well for a couple of reasons. First, you have all the right people here. These people are all working on the same issues -- police reform and construction issues all over Afghanistan," Alexander said.

This was a productive first meeting but hopefully not the last, Hairston said.

"I think it's a very important conference. I hope this is the beginning of many more conferences and collaborations," he added.

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Marti D. Ribeiro
Combined Joint Task Force - 76
Public Affairs

MEHTAR LAM PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Afghan and Coalition troops provided medical care to 1,500 people in Laghman and Nuristan provinces last week.

At seven remote villages, men, women and children received treatment for ailments ranging from headaches to heartburn. Children were dewormed; villagers also received vitamins and instruction in sanitation.

Marines assigned to the Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team escorted 18 medical professionals, including Afghan and Coalition doctors, to the villages from March 19 through March 24.

The medical professionals set up in clinics, schools and fields -- whatever sites were available in each village. Men, women and children were separated and evaluated by a triage team composed of Army and Air

Force medical technicians, and appropriate medications were distributed. If further evaluation was needed, patients were sent to the physicians.

"In most cases, the Afghan physician observed the patient and then discussed treatment and medication with the American doctors," said Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Drew J. Kosmowski, the surgeon for the Coalition's Combined Joint Task Force - 76 and a member of the medical civic assistance program team. "Sometimes we had to prescribe different medications based on what we brought with us."

The Afghan physicians gave villagers their medications.

"We want the villagers to have faith in their own doctors," said Army Staff Sgt. Brian L. Holly, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the cooperative medical assistance team.

The physicians did what they could for more serious ailments, referring some patients

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Photo by Army Pfc. Micheal J. Nyeste, 19th Public Affairs Detachment

(From left) German Air Force Lt. Col Thilo Engels, German Army Col. Hans Patki and German Air Force Lt. Col Thomas Bertram talk during a break from the PRT commanders' conference at Bagram Airfield. Engels is the regional area coordinator North Mazar-e-Sharif J-5 Branch, Patki is the commander of International Security Assistance Force's Kunduz Provincial Reconstruction Team, and Bertram is a military adviser for the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan.

CARE, from Page 4

to medical facilities.

All children, six months to 12 years, were dewormed and given vitamins.

"Deworming is very important because worms are common among children here," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Kimberly M. Kauffman, another member of the medical civic assistance program team. "If worms get into their (gastrointestinal) tract, they will take nutrients from the children, which can cause malnourishment."

After treatment, the patients attended sanitation class. Led by local teachers, health professionals or interpreters, the class included information on

diarrhea, malaria and personal hygiene.

As a result, even patients with no medical problems gained something from the medical assistance program, Kosmowski said.

The visits were a first for Coalition forces, who had not organized medical assistance visits to these seven villages before. More visits are planned in other villages; continued participation by Afghan doctors is planned.

"We're trying to give people faith and confidence in their national and local governments," Kosmowski said. "We want the Afghan people to know that their government is going to take care of their health."

Noor, an Afghan interpreter, shows a villager how to give medicine to his son. Noor, who like many Afghans uses only one name, was part of an Afghan and Coalition medical team. The team provided medical care and sanitation classes to people in Laghman and Nuristan provinces from March 19 through March 24.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Marti D. Ribeiro, Combined Joint Task Force - 76 Public Affairs

Enduring Voices

How will this deployment make you a better person?



**Army Cpt.
Dylan Reyes-Cairo**
Task Force Phoenix
"It's made me think about the important things in life a lot more than I did before, like family, freedom and helping others."



**Navy Petty Officer
2nd Class
Sarah Foland**
Combined Joint Task Force - 76
"It's a good experience working with other services and nations. It's let me see how everyone operates, and makes me appreciate where I came from."



**Army Spc.
Steven Harris**
Delta 3-10th General Support Aviation Battalion
"I've gained a lot of experiences off this deployment. My unit is new and is on their first deployment and I now know what it's like working with a new unit."



**Air Force 1st Lt.
Anthony Mollison**
Combined Joint Task Force - 76
"Seeing all the U.S. and Coalition forces come together as one to carry out the mission has made me a better officer and helps me better prepare my troops."

Civil affairs Soldiers assist secondary school

**By Army Sgt. 1st Class
Kenneth L. McCooley
19th Public Affairs Detachment**

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
-- Children with happy, gleaming eyes and eager hands crowded the gates of Sheragha Shahed Secondary School as the Soldiers of Task Force Tiger rolled into the nearby town of Ja Farkhel on Tuesday carrying much needed school supplies.

The Task Force Tiger Soldiers brought the children 200 book bags jammed with school supplies, teaching aids, a large quantity of pens, some volleyballs and candy.

The civil affairs Soldiers try to make it to local schools at least three times a month, said 1st Lt. Darrell Pearman, civil affairs direct support team leader for Task Force Tiger. But the frequency of visits depends on the other missions that he and his Soldiers have to handle.

"(Missions like this) build upon our relationship with the people of Afghanistan," Pearman said. "It also sends a good message to the families of these children. I know, as a father, when someone helps my son, I appreciate it."

The appreciation was also visible in the eyes and hands of the students. Some were able to control their emotions and patiently wait in their seats for the Soldiers to distribute the supplies, while others milled about trying to make sure they



Photos by Army Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth McCooley

Army Sgt. Eli Coman hands out candy to a group of students at the Sheragha Shahed Secondary School in the town of Ja Farkhel. Coman is assigned to the 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion.

received a coveted book bag, pen or even a piece of candy.

It is this type of enthusiasm seen in the children that lets him know this mission was a success if only in the short term, Pearman said. He also said he knows that missions like this will help ensure the future of Afghanistan.

"We measure success immediately by how the children respond when we arrive," Pearman said. "It's great when the kids and men recognize me and say hello."

It definitely makes missions like this worthwhile.

"In the long term, we measure success by increased student attendance at schools and when they further their educations at universities," he said.

The supplies were appreciated by the schoolchildren and the staff. The school's principal, Fazil Rahim, said the donations were needed to help build a strong partnership for the future of Afghanistan.

"Your help is very important to the children of Afghanistan," Rahim said. "All of the community appreciate the support. We will work together with the Coalition and the Americans as a team to help rebuild our country."

To ensure the success of Afghanistan's future, Pearman said he believes they have to start with a strong base and work up from there. By doing this he said he believes the Coalition can build a strong foundation for continued success.

"Kids in every nation are the future," Pearman said. "They are not only the starting point but the 'building blocks' you need to start with. If you can gain trust on this level, you can gain trust with the villages, and then with the schools. Once you build that rapport, you're on the way to a brighter future."



(Above) Children at the Sheragha Shahed Secondary School in Ja Farkhel enjoy treats distributed by U.S. Soldiers.

(Left) Army Staff Sgt. Jason Arnold hands out pens to a group of students at the Sheragha Shahed Secondary School in the town of Ja Farkhel. Arnold is assigned to the 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion.

Airmen build maintenance, storage facility

By Army Sgt. Mayra Kennedy
345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Three Airmen from the 451st Air Expeditionary Group built a new maintenance and storage building here during their spare time.

The three, Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Nadreaw, and Air Force Staff Sgts. Kyle Stine and Kevin Moon, finished the project in two weeks while still doing their regular jobs.

It was difficult working with a small crew, but it was a team effort that made the building a reality, especially when the unit operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, said Stine, a telephone system technician.

The new facility is a far cry from what the 451st had three weeks earlier when there was only a tent to hold supplies. It was considered an unworkable environment because there was a lot of standing water in the tent.

The tent was raised only four months before the unit's arrival, but weather conditions were not a factor in the making of the tent. The first time it rained a couple of inches of water created a flood inside the tent and an ongoing problem for the supply crew, said Nadreaw, a telecommunication system control specialist.

Moon served as the leader of the project and designer of the mental blueprint for the building, while Stine was able to use his electrician skills from his civilian job when building the facility.

As the supply sergeant for the unit, Stine said the previous tent frustrated him because it was making his job much more difficult, because of the standing water. The new structure has improved the Airmen's working conditions by adding more space and a dry, organized environment. This was a way to leave the base in a better condition, Stine said.

Moon, who has been in Kandahar since Thanksgiving, said building this structure was more than just a task.

"Actually, this project was a stress



Photos by Army Sgt. Mayra Kennedy

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Nadreaw, left, walks into the new building while Air Force Staff Sgt. Kyle Stine checks the electrical box outside of the building on Kandahar Airfield. It just passed its first building inspection. The Airmen are assigned to the 451st Air Expeditionary Group.

reliever for me," Moon said. "I love doing this type of work, and I did it back home for three years."

The effort of this team didn't go unnoticed by the 451st leaders.

Overseeing all this was Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Michael Meyer, the unit's superintendent.

Nicknamed "Bob the Builder" by the three-man construction team because of his encouragements during the project, Meyer said he was honored to be part of the 451st because they make things happen.

"Everyone should be proud of them," Meyer said.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Kyle Stine (left), Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Nadreaw (center) and Air Force Capt. Steven Milatz from the 451st Air Expeditionary Group look over their new building after it passed its first inspection at Kandahar Airfield.

Soldiers deliver sup



Soldiers help carry a box of donated goods during a civic-assistance mission in Kapisa Province on March 28.



Lt. Col. John Elwood shows an activity book to one of the officials at the Kapisa Province orphanage. Elwood is the Combined Joint Task Force - 76 inspector general.



Soldiers distribute candy to children at the Kapisa Province assistance mission that provided 260 children with clothing,

By Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry
19th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Hundreds of Afghan children gathered to receive supplies from a group of 10th Mountain Division Soldiers participating in the Base Operations Chapel Adopt-An-Orphanage program March 28 at the Kapisa Province orphanage.

"The purpose of this mission is really twofold," said Chaplain (Capt.) Jeff Wirick, chaplain assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division.

"We are obviously supporting kids who are in need, but we are also building a bridge of trust between the Coalition forces and the Afghan people," Wirick said.

After years of war, that bridge couldn't have come at a better time.

"I think in a country such as Afghanistan, where they've seen so much war in the past, the trust factor is low," Wirick said.

Providing the orphanage's 260 children with clothing, shoes, hygiene products and school supplies is one way the Coalition is working to gain the trust of their Afghan friends.

"We're trying to help these kids so the Afghans will have a

plies to orphanage



Orphanage March 28. The Soldiers were part of a civic-hygiene products and school supplies.

etter future," Wirick said.

Americans in the states are also taking steps to make life better for Afghans.

Most of these supplies are coming from civic organizations, churches and schoolchildren, Wirick said.

"We appreciate everything you are doing for us, all the help. We are glad we have someone to help us, remind us that we aren't alone," said Hal Haj Abdul Suroor Ruhullah, the director of civil work for the Kapisa orphanage.

It is easier to build a city than to raise a child, he said of the orphanage's efforts to nurture Afghanistan's orphaned children.

Suroor Ruhullah, a former school teacher, said he sees the American aide supplies as a way to improve the lives of children who have little to call their own.

"I want to help them. ... They look to us because they don't have anybody," he said.

Besides items to satisfy their needs, the children were also able to satisfy their taste buds.

After unloading the truck full of supplies, Soldiers handed out bags of candy to the children. The troops were met with many smiles and thanks.

"This is good for the American people. ... It basically makes being here worthwhile," Wirick said.



Photos by Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry

A young Afghan girl at Kapisa Province orphanage grasps candy inside her garment. The candy was distributed by Soldiers conducting a civic-assistance mission March 28.

Army, Afghans conduct patrols

Combined efforts keep Coalition troops, Afghans safe

By Army Pfc. Micheal J. Nyeste
19th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
-- Members of the 561st Military Police Company and the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Division, patrol areas within the 20-kilometer safety ring outside of Bagram Airfield daily.

The military police Soldiers provide support for Afghan National Police at vehicle checkpoints, and conduct route assessments and village assessments ensuring the safety of service members and Afghans. They also provide civic assistance to villagers in the areas surrounding Bagram Airfield.

The Soldiers play a backseat role, providing support and security for the ANP while the ANP officers conduct vehicle searches and look for drugs and illegal weapons at vehicle checkpoints.

"(We are) glad to take the backseat role because of how well the members of the ANP perform their job," said Army Staff Sgt. David Rupp, a squad leader with the



Photos by Army Pfc. Micheal J. Nyeste

Army Sgt. Bobby Garmon holds a flashlight while Army Staff Sgt. David Rupp inspects a trailer attached to a tactical vehicle during a checkpoint mission. Both Soldiers are from the 561st Military Police Company.

561st MP Company.

"The ANP performed well tonight. They did thorough searches of the vehicles we pulled over at the vehicle checkpoints," Rupp said. "They checked underneath the hoods, in the trunks, did searches and overall did a very good job."

ANP officers take on the brunt of the

work at vehicle checkpoints, which brings a certain element of danger, said Mohamad Arf, a member of an ANP quick reaction force.

"We must stop cars and carefully search all the vehicles. Everything can be dangerous, but it's not very dangerous

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A member of the Afghan National Police checks under the hood of a car at a vehicle checkpoint outside of Bagram Airfield during a joint security patrol.



(Above) A Soldier from the 561st Military Police Company searches under a Humvee to see if he can discover what caused a rotor to overheat.

PATROL, from Page 10

because I am always very careful," Arf said. "I am glad we are working with U.S. and Coalition forces together to try to stop the al-Qaida, the criminals and the Taliban."

Working hand-in-hand with the ANP at vehicle checkpoints contributes to the safety of the Afghan people and Coalition forces here, but route assessments also play an important role, said Army Pfc. Jeffery Meyer, a gunner for the 561st MP Company.

"On the route assessments, we record the number of speed bumps on a road, look for possible ambush points and look for anything that might be a potential (improvised explosive device). There are numerous things we take into consideration while conducting route assessments," Meyer said.

The company not only helps keep service members and Afghans safe on the roads, it also helps improve the quality of life for Afghans by conducting village assessments, Rupp said.

When Soldiers from the 561st MP Company go to villages, they often pass out items like water, blankets, food, prayer rugs, soccer balls and kites. This sometimes leads to people giving troops intelligence on terrorist whereabouts and weapon caches, Meyer said.

Troops also talk to villagers and local elders about the status of their health and water supplies and try to accommo-

date their needs, Meyer said.

If all goes as planned, the civic assistance and work of the members of the 561st MP Company will enhance the



A member of the Afghan National Police inspects a vehicle during a routine patrol near Bagram Airfield.

well-being of troops and Afghans alike and make the 20-kilometer safety ring around Bagram Airfield safer every day, he added.



A member of the Afghan National Police searches a child at a checkpoint near Bagram Airfield.

Command sergeant major ends Afghan tour

By Army Pfc. Micheal J. Nyeste

19th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan

— Army Command Sgt. Maj. Cynthia Pritchett, the command sergeant major of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan, departed Afghanistan after a change-of-responsibility ceremony at Camp Eggers on April 5.

Pritchett left two days shy of being in country for exactly two years. In those two years, Pritchett said she has seen firsthand the progress being made in Afghanistan with the Afghan National Army, the country's infrastructure, women's rights and education.

"When I first got here, the Afghan National Army was just in training. We were putting a lot of people through training, but they weren't very much

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Army Command Sgt. Maj. Cynthia A. Pritchett hands a sword to Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Curt Brownhill officially relieving her of her responsibility here April 5. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel R. Wood assumed the responsibility. Brownhill is the command chief master sergeant for U.S. Central Command.

Photo by Army Army Spc. Carina M. Garcia, 345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

U.S. doctors extend healing hand

By Army Pfc.

Micheal J. Nyeste

19th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD,

Afghanistan -- In an effort to improve the lives of all Afghans, U.S. doctors are giving their Afghan counterparts a crash course in emergency health care.

The resident critical care rotation course, taught by doctors from the 14th Combat Support Hospital here, is designed to share medical knowledge with Afghan doctors and enhance the capabilities of Afghanistan's medical system, said Army Col. Jeffrey Haun, 14th CSH commander.

"It's an effort to share the medical expertise of a highly specialized clinical staff that we are fortunate enough to have brought with us from the states," Haun said.

Afghan doctors who work at CURE International Hospital



"I've Changed. I'm better than I was before. I'm more confident."

**Dr. Sayed Matin
CURE International Hospital**

in Kabul and have been medical doctors for less than five years can go through a rotation at the course here.

Experienced U.S. doctors share their expertise in the two-week course by acting as primary instructors and mentor to the Afghan doctors.

Afghan doctors also receive hands-on trauma training and complete coursework from medical textbooks.

After completing all the tasks on a two-week checklist, the doctors graduate and receive a certificate.

The course is rewarding and beneficial to Afghan doctors'

careers and their patients' health, said Sayed Matin, a doctor at the Kabul hospital, who recently graduated the course.

"It was wonderful. All the physicians who trained me were very kind and cooperating," Sayed said.

Though the physicians who trained Sayed taught him new medical techniques and procedures, Sayed said one of the most important things he learned was how to properly handle emergency situations.

"They taught me the basics of how physicians act when they come across emergency

cases. The physicians never lost their cool. I've changed. I'm better than I was before. I'm more confident," he said.

Sayed said he enjoyed his time in the course.

The U.S. physicians were just as happy to have had the opportunity to teach him, said Army Col. Thomas Frank, the 14th CSH deputy commander of clinical services.

"He did very well and was very enthusiastic. He was grateful for the opportunity and the knowledge we passed on to him," Frank said.

It's that passing of knowledge that Frank said he hopes will leave behind something the U.S. can look back on and take pride in.

"We want to leave behind a legacy and not a vacuum, and we're doing that by teaching a man to fish so he'll be fed for a lifetime," Frank said.

A lifetime Sayed can now spend healing his countrymen.

PRITCHETT, from Page 12

employed throughout the country. Then we had the presidential election, and we started pushing the ANA out throughout the countryside," Pritchett said. "They still have a long way to go, but it's kind of like climbing Mount Everest. You just have to take it one step at a time, and that's what's happening in Afghanistan."

Pritchett said she also has seen the strides made in the field of infrastructure by Coalition forces and looks forward to seeing more progress being made.

"The (United States Agency for International Development) and our Army Corps of Engineers have been working with the international community to complete the 'ring road' which will connect all the large cities in Afghanistan together to get commerce flowing and make it a little bit easier to get around Afghanistan. I think you'll see vast improvement," Pritchett said.

Pritchett said she has also seen advances in women's rights in Afghanistan. She said she also likes to think that she has aided the movement simply by being a high-ranking woman in the Army.

Her position showed ANA men that women can play a significant role in society and contribute to their country's military, she said.

"I think the greatest thing I've accomplished here is being a good role model for the Afghan people. The women are



Soldiers and friends attend a farewell dinner honoring Army Command Sgt. Maj. Cynthia Pritchett on Bagram Airfield.

stepping up to the plate. They're making progress in the bigger cities, but as you get further and further out into the countryside there's much room for improvement," Pritchett said. "The other day I saw a female driving a car with a male passenger. We're starting to see more and more of their faces showing and that's a good sign."

She said she also witnessed progress in education.

"For the four years we've been here, 4.4 million students have gone back to school, and we're building teacher institu-

tions to get more teachers in the schools," Pritchett said.

With all of the things Pritchett has seen and accomplished, she said she hopes that service members and Afghans will remember her most for helping them by being a voice for all they've accomplished.

"Hopefully, I have been a good spokesperson for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines and the people of Afghanistan, so when I get home I can tell people about the good things going on here," Pritchett said.



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

A 561st Military Police Company Soldier prepares to don his body armor before a patrol mission near Bagram Airfield.

Photo by Army Pfc. Micheal J. Nyeste
19th Public Affairs Detachment

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.af.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

Corpsman's good works remembered

By Marine Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Task Force Lava Public Affairs

JALALABAD, Afghanistan -- When Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class John Fralish was killed Feb. 6 during a firefight with insurgents in Laghman Province, in eastern Afghanistan, it was by no means the end of his remarkable story – or his legacy.

Fralish, of New Kingstown, Pa., is revered by not only his fellow corpsmen and the Marines and Soldiers with whom he served, but also by residents of a tiny village high in the mountains near the forward operating base at Mehtar Lam.

"The name of John Fralish lives on in the mountains of Afghanistan among the local population," said Army 1st Sgt. David Schneider, a first sergeant of E Company of the 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry of the Michigan Army National Guard. "Just before he died, John risked his life to save the life of a little Afghan girl on the brink of death."

Fralish was patrolling with A Company of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment – to which he was attached – when he got word from an elderly Afghan man that a little girl was in bad shape a few miles away.

And with that, Fralish, Schneider, two ANA soldiers and an interpreter left with the old man to find the girl.

"John wanted to help everyone who was hurt," said Schneider, a native of Dimondale, Mich. "It's just the way he was. Keep in mind we were in hostile territory, and it was the middle of the night, but John wanted to go."

"The old man led us to this little mud hut in the middle of nowhere up in the mountains," Schneider continued. "John went to where the little girl was. She had fallen in the mountains a while back and was missing a chunk of her calf muscle. ...

"The cut was six inches long and five inches wide down to the bone. Fabric from an old dress was being used as a bandage, and it was soaked through not with blood, but with puss. Infection had set in, and she probably had no more than a couple of days to live if she would have

remained in that state," he said.

Fralish cleaned the wound, applied antibiotics and redressed it.

"Still, that was only going to buy her a couple of more days of life at best. She needed immediate surgery in a hospital," Schneider said. "We were on a combat mission that we had to get back to, but John wasn't just going to sit by and let this girl die."

Fralish took off his rank insignia and gave it to the old man, along with a note he wrote explaining who he was and what the situation was, so that the girl and her family could be given safe passage to the medical facility at Mehtar Lam.

"Over the next couple of days, while we were in the field, the girl's family got her to Mehtar Lam on the back of a donkey," Schneider said. "When we returned to the FOB at Mehtar Lam, the girl was there being treated. Her family was overjoyed to see John again, and they rightfully credited him with making this all possible."

Still, the girl's wound and infection were too serious to be adequately treated at Mehtar Lam, Schneider said. Nothing short of amputation of her lower leg – which could not be performed locally – would save her life.

"When we heard that, everyone passed the hat around, and we got enough money together so the family could hire a car to take them to the hospital at Bagram Airfield," Schneider said. "It was Airmen, Soldiers, Marines and Sailors -- everyone chipping in together."

Fralish's note and rank insignia got the family through every checkpoint to Bagram, where the little girl underwent successful surgery, Schneider said.

"She made it, and she's recovering nicely and is alive and well now directly because of John," Schneider said. "She has a second chance at life."

Around the time of the girl's surgery, Fralish was killed in action.

"That whole village mourned John's death along with us," said Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Cameron Stewart of Spokane, Wash., a corpsman with the 1/3 Marines. "All those who served with John are deeply affected by his loss. To see



Photo by Navy Chief Petty Officer Claude English

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class John Fralish poses for a photo in early 2006. Fralish, was on patrol with A Company of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, when he was killed in a firefight Feb. 6.

Afghan villagers also affected is a true testament to the character and type of person John was."

The Afghan man who led Fralish to the girl's hut recently visited Mehtar Lam and returned Fralish's rank insignia. Schneider gave it to the 1/3 Marines' commanding officer, Lt. Col. James Bierman, who has since mailed it – with a letter from Schneider – to Fralish's parents in Pennsylvania.

"It was an honor to pass this on John Fralish's family," Bierman said. "This entire story demonstrates the character and nobility of the young Marines and Sailors serving here in Afghanistan."

And also, perhaps, demonstrates how one man's character can change the mindset of a community. Since Fralish's death, villagers in the surrounding area have also made it a point to alert authorities to insurgent activity.

"Not only was a little girl's life saved by John, but more American and Coalition lives can be saved as a result of the insurgents losing their grip on the area, all because of one man's sense of humanity," Schneider said.

High school reopens

By Marine Capt. Dan Huvane

Task Force Lava Public Affairs

JALALABAD AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Hundreds of people gathered March 25 to celebrate the renovation of Agam High School in the Pachir wa Agam District in Nangarhar Province.

Coalition forces funded the \$25,000 project through the Command's Emergency Response Program.

Mohammed Sadiq, the school's primary headmaster, welcomed district sub-governor Sayeed Rahman, other officials and faculty to the festive event, along with national and border police officers and U.S. Soldiers and Marines.

"Today, I am happy to see so many children at this school from this mountain area," Sadiq said through an interpreter. "This is the witness that we can show to the people of this district and the world, that Americans are not here to destroy, as the enemies of Afghanistan say. They have come from many places far away, and they give their funds to help us."

"We want our children to be like other countries' children, with chairs to sit on, books to read, and a roof over their heads," he continued. "With your help and cooperation, the children of Afghanistan can be more like them."

The project's chief engineer, Abdul Khalil, implored the students to take care of their school, as funds for such projects are precious.

The 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, which since has departed Afghanistan, funded the project with Commander's Emergency Response Program funds. The regiment's successor, the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, supervised the work, which included a new well.

Marine Capt. Bart Battista, commander of B Company, of the 1/3 Marines, reminded officials that further improvements will be tied to the local security situation.

"We help the government when we can and where we can, and are always very happy to do it. But we must work together to improve security here, so that more help comes from nongovernmental organizations," he said.

"To the children here today: You are the future of the district," Battista continued. "Study hard so that you can be the teachers, headmasters or even the sub-governor. The only way you can do that is by applying yourself to your work."



Photos by Marine Capt. Dan Huvane, Task Force Lava Public Affairs

Sayeed Rahman, sub-governor of Pachir wa Agam District, Nangarhar Province, speaks at the official reopening ceremony of Agam High School near Jalalabad Airfield on March 25. The rehabilitation of the school was funded by the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, with \$25,000 in Commander's Emergency Response Program funds.



(Above) Hundreds of students gather at Agam High School for its official reopening ceremony March 25 in Nangarhar Province.



(Left) Sayeed Rahman, the sub-governor of Pachir wa Agam District in Nangarhar Province, cuts the ribbon at the reopening ceremony of Agam High School near Jalalabad Airfield on March 25. At left is Marine Capt. Bart Battista, commander of B Company of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. Behind him is Army Maj. Dennis C. Edwards, the battalion civil affairs officer. At right is Nu Salaam, the president of Agam High School.

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“Better be despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident security.”

-- Confucius (551 BC - 479 BC)